

## Contributions

### BIBLE PORTRAITS—Joseph

B. C. MOOMAW

As we must turn back some thousands of years for the grandest poetry in literature, so we must travel to the same distant period for the most beautiful story. Nothing in all the vast library of subsequent genius excels the pathos, the human interest, the delicate sympathy, the brilliant action, the startling surprises, the thrilling situations, the temptation, the audacity of wickedness and the steadfastness of virtue, the sudden contrasts, the happy and triumphant denouement, and the constant coming into the light of that thread of providence which runs throughout the story. It is absorbing, powerful, pregnant with those verisimilitudes of truth which move the deepest depths of the soul and create character. No one except the totally insensible can read the story of Joseph without being made better and stronger, his own higher manhood stimulated and reinforced by the magnificent manliness of this isolated and forlorn Hebrew youth going down from the warm gardens of parental affection into the cruel deserts of servitude, and anguish, and heart breaking calamity.

Alongside of that story any attempt to outline the character of Joseph is like an effort to translate the dawning glories of a springtime morning, or the gorgeous panorama of an autumnal sunset, into the pale and ineffectual creations of the canvass. It can be done, but the result is a profanation. There are however spiritual lessons to which we may profitably attend, and of these the first may be stated as *the courage of the vision*. Neither the scowling hostility, biting sneers, and dangerous plotting of his brethren, nor even the stern reproof of his venerated father, could deter him from speaking out boldly what he believed to be a God's message communicated to him in his dreams. He was true to the vision. Come what may, he would speak it. His frank and candid soul could not but reflect the light which came upon it from supernal sources.

We each of us have our visions, not perhaps as Joseph had his, nevertheless they are God's messages to us, light sudden or ultimate shining in upon us from the fountain of glory, truth, duty, responsibility, as it applies to the warfare of righteousness around us. Are we true to these visions? Do we speak them out and act them out fearlessly, without stopping to calculate what Dan, or Gad, or Judah we may offend, or what hornet's nest of opposition and persecution we may stir up against us? There comes the caravan of Ishmaelites; hide the truth, thou coward, lest thou be bound hand and foot, and delivered into

Egyptian bondage. The vision is against a false doctrine, or a worldly life, or a diabolical saloon. Hide it quick; seal thy lips. Nay, speak it out, like a man. Let honesty of soul and loyalty to truth be dearer than liberty or life. Ages to come and generations unborn await the issue of that supreme struggle, hang upon that momentous decision, tremble in the balances to which the touch of an honest or a dishonest finger may give the direction of triumph or defeat.

The second lesson to which we are pointed is the inseparable union of sincere piety and incorruptible integrity. The bare imagination that these two might be in the smallest measure divorced, or that the latter might be compromised just a little, or a little more, without impairing the title to the former, lies at the foundation of all the defeats and sickening delays which have attended the human side of the history of the church. The forms of piety have been zealously maintained for reputation's sake, while the infinitely more potent argument, "for character's sake," or "for God's approval," has not availed to prevent that sickening emasculation of virtue which is today the weakness and the disgrace of the visible church. Self-indulgence, worldliness, covetousness, sharp practice, dishonest dealing, and every other species of genteel depravity which thrives best a million miles from Gospel rectitude and Holy Ghost spirituality, pass freely backward and forward across the now imaginary line which separates between the very real world and the very nominal church. What would have become of Joseph, and what would have become of the vital interests of humanity which hinged upon his career, if his conduct while in captivity, or at any time after his introduction to history, had fallen below the purity and spirituality of that lofty ideal, that elevated piety, which he had set for the rule of his life? When everything was against him he was true to himself, and true to his God, preferring virtue in a dungeon to shame in a palace, and setting an example of superiority and victory at the very time of life and at the very point which in all ages has proved to be the most vulnerable of the defenses of human nature, and the most exposed to the inroads of shame and crime.

Another important lesson that we may learn is that temporal adversity may, when associated with unwavering loyalty to God, be a providential preparation for the highest usefulness. There is an interesting tradition that the old Egyptian Pharaohs, immediately prior to their succession to the throne, were subjected to a most rigid discipline lasting for weeks, and perhaps months. They were made to labor and hunger and suffer like a slave, and to pass through every other grade of subject experience in or-

der that their government of the people might afterward be enlightened by a knowledge of their real condition. But the providential training of adversity accomplishes much more than this objective result. Its subjective effect upon character constitutes its great value, and this observation is so distinctly corroborated by history that the providential severities which enter into the experience of a child of God are really the greatest marks of distinction, the surest evidences of election, either specific or general, which it is in our power to conceive. Thro conflict and suffering to victory and joy, thro privation to power, thro detraction to honor, thro great anguish to great usefulness, thro the dungeon to the throne, this is the divine road for those and those alone who have the courage to walk therein. The multitude turns back at the entering in of this royal highway, but the choice spirit now and again enters, and finds that beyond the sharp stones and the rending thorns it widens into the infinities and the splendors of immortality.

### GOD'S GOODNESS

C. H. WETTERBE

A multitude of people hold very erroneous views of the goodness of God. They say that if God be as good as the Bible represents him to be, then it must follow that he will eventually bring into his heaven all of the human family. But such a conclusion does not properly follow the premises. While it is true that God is absolutely, perfectly, infinitely good, it is false to assume that, therefore, he will so fit all men's hearts as to properly prepare them for an abode in heaven. Perfect goodness in God cannot, in itself make sinful men good; it cannot change the badness of a depraved soul; it does not transfer its goodness to unrepentant hearts, irrespective of any favorable response from those hearts. God never forces his goodness upon sinners to the extent of creating in them new life and new dispositions. His goodness has caused him to provide a plan of salvation, whereby all men may be saved, if all men will comply with the terms of that salvation; and it is because God is perfectly good that he insists that all sinners shall comply with the terms upon which his goodness is displayed in saving men. But bad men say that they will not comply with those terms. At the same time they say that God ought to save them, just because he is good. The idea is absurd. Their idea of God's goodness seems to be that he ought to let them have their own way, serve their own will and pleasure, as long as they shall live on earth, thus rejecting his terms of grace and salvation, and then at the close of their selfish and rebellious career take them into heaven. It requires but little intelligence to see that